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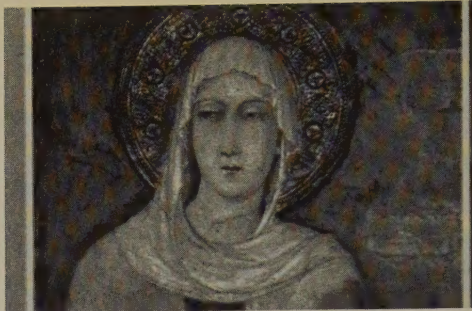
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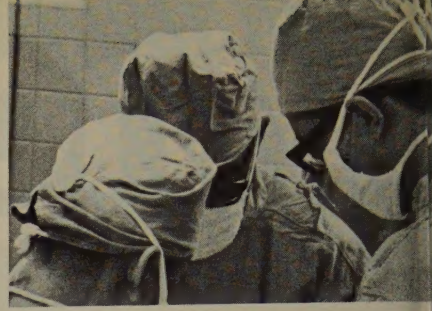
Santaji
- an interesting story



Towards a New Humanity
- experiences of life



2 **UNITY AND THE SAINTS:** Second in a four-part series on the Christian concept of unity as it has been emphasized throughout the ages by Saints and Founders of different religious orders.



4 **TOWARDS A NEW HUMANITY:** This issue features experiences of life in the field of medicine, education and economy work.

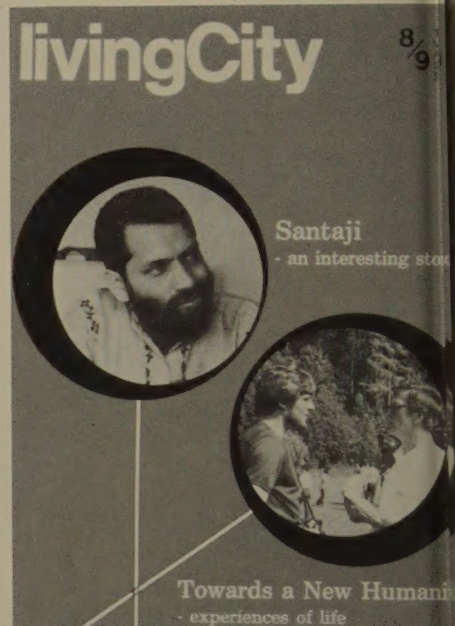
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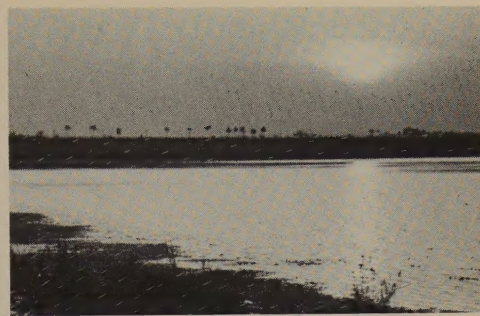
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SANTAJI THE GURU: Life was quite different in the village of Belewadi after the arrival of Santaji, a Christian guru.



13 THE CHILDREN OF LASCAHOBAS: A small town in Haiti became the focal point of a woman's project to save "her" children.



24 IN THE LIGHT OF THE PRESENT MOMENT: "I know now that the end is near," Rosa wrote at this point in her diary. Hope, she decided, is the virtue she will try and live in this period.

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UNITY AND THE SAINTS

by CHIARA LUBICH

We asked Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare, a movement animated by the "spirituality of unity", how the charisms which gave life to different religious families in the Church have emphasized or presently emphasize the Christian concept of unity.

The true charisms which bring about "new families" within the Church always emphasize unity even if different spiritualities place the accent on other aspects of the Gospel. They do this because they are ecclesial charisms that serve for the edification of the Christian community, that is, of the Church, as we saw last month. This was certainly true for some of the saints of the XII and XIV centuries such as St. Frances of Assisi, St. Clare of Assisi, St. Angela of Foligno and St. Catherine of Siena.

In the XV and XVI centuries other saints/founders speak of unity with particular emphasis. One example of this is St. Angela Merici (1474 - 1540). In her testament she addresses the superiors of her Society, imploring them, among other things, to always keep unity and peace among themselves and with their 'daughters': "... Especially take care that (my daughters) are united and in concord in all they desire, as we read of the apostles and of the Christians in the early Church: 'They were of one heart and one soul'. And

you too must try to be this way with all your daughters, because the more you are united, the more Jesus Christ will be in your midst as a father and good shepherd.

"There is no other sign to show that you are in the grace of God than to love one another and to be united, because he himself says: 'By this they will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' Loving one another and getting along well with one another is a sure sign that you are on the right path, the path which is most pleasing to God."¹

In one of the nine "Reminders" that St. Angela left to her spiritual daughters she wrote: "My final word to you, which I would willingly write with my blood, is that you be in concord, united together, all of one heart and one will. Be bound to one another, helping one another, putting up with one another out of love for Jesus Christ.

"If you make the effort to be like this always, undoubtedly the Lord will be in your midst.

"On your side you will have the Blessed Mother, the Apostles, and all the saints and angels, all the blessed of heaven and also all the creatures of earth. From all eternity, God has commanded that those who out of love for him are united and in agreement in doing good, should have every prosperity



and everything will work towards their advantage because they have God and all creatures on their side. Consider therefore how important union and concord are: desire it, look for it, embrace it and conserve it with all your might, because I tell you that if you are all together thus united, you will be a mighty rock or fortress, invincible against every adversity, persecution or diabolical trickery.

"Moreover, I tell you that every grace you ask of God will be granted unfailingly, and I will always be in your midst supporting your prayers."²

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1556), a saint of the XVI century, also speaks about unity. During his lifetime the Society of Jesus, the order he founded, spread all over the world and St. Ignatius felt the need to help its members to be united with one another and with their superiors.

One part of the "Constitutions" is dedicated to this topic: "The more difficult it is for the members of this Congregation to be united to their head and with one another—since they are scattered all over the world—...all the more must we seek what can be helpful for maintaining this union."³

He then goes on to list that which can be helpful for bringing about unity: "The prin-

cipal bond that contributes to the union of members with one another and with their head is love for Our Lord."⁴

St. Ignatius also considers poverty and obedience as important aids to unity: "For this love it is helpful to preserve and strengthen the bond of obedience."⁵

"And ... it will also be helpful to have contempt for temporal things, in which love for self, the principal enemy of this union and of universal good, find occasion to lead the soul astray."⁶

St. Ignatius also sees other "internal means"—as he calls them—which, according to him, serve in bringing about unity. They are unity of mind in doctrine and judgment, and unity of will.

He sees also "external means" as being useful: "External uniformity, in clothing, in the celebration of the Mass and so on can also be very helpful means."⁷

In one part of the Constitution dedicated to the youth of his "Society" he wrote: "As much as possible, *idem sapiamus, idem dicamus omnes*." (Let us all have the same sentiments and use the same language.)⁸ St. Ignatius also places great value on the communication of news among the members as a help in maintaining unity: "...To maintain this love, it is helpful to receive news from one another, to communicate with one another."⁹ This great Saint, like St. Catherine, uses very strong language when speaking about disunity: "Whoever is an instigator of division among those who live together, either with one another or with their head, must be sent away from that community very quickly like a plague which could be contagious, unless an immediate remedy is found."¹⁰

To be continued.

1) Biographical notes, testament, memoirs, rule and prayers of St. Angela Merici foundress of the Ursulines published in Milan, 1963 pp. 31-32; 2) *Idem*, pp. 53-54; 3) "Gli scritti di sant' Ignazio di Loyola" (The writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola) compiled by M. Gioia, Turin 1977, p. 596; 4) *Idem*; 5) *Idem*, pp. 650-651; 6) *Idem*, p. 602; 7) *Idem*, p. 602; 8) (Cf. Phil. 2:2 and 1 Cor. 1:10; 9) "Gli scritti di sant' Ignazio di Loyola" pp. 650-651; 10) *Idem*, p. 600.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The following are experiences of life of members of the New Humanity Movement from different countries involved in various fields of human endeavor.

Medicine

The real measure of success

I have lived as a Gen¹ of the Focolare Movement for many years and I have tried to live its spirituality in everything I do.

Last year I finished medical school and started my internship with a new perspective on work and its importance in reflecting my choice of God. I have tried to take things one at a time, doing each task well. In doing this I have come to realize that in the working world society places productivity before the individual. As a doctor in a certain way the measure of success is getting as many people on their feet as fast as possible. Yet I have realized in living the Gospel that the real measure of success is whether I have made it to love each person, each day, whether they will ever get well or not.

Recently I had a twenty-year old boy as a patient.

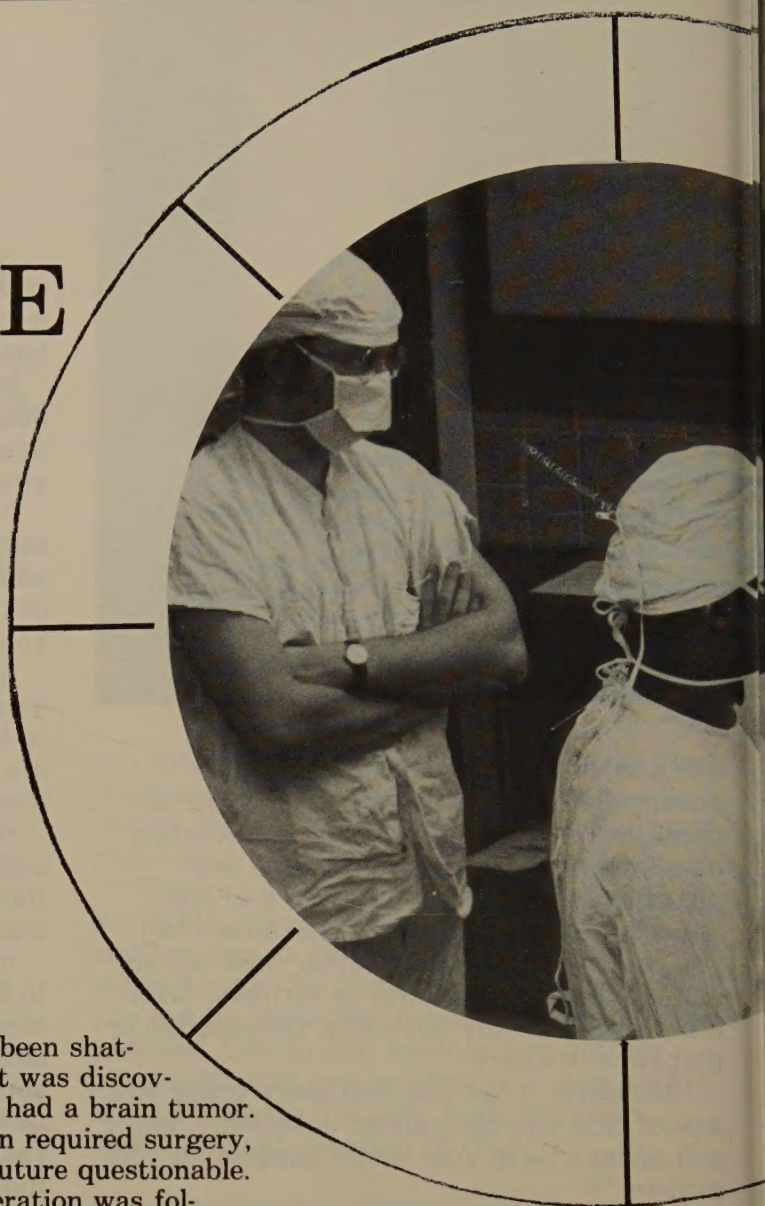
His life had been shattered when it was discovered that he had a brain tumor. The condition required surgery, leaving his future questionable. The first operation was followed by multiple complications necessitating a second operation. This young man would often call me into his room and cry about how his life had radically changed and about his fears for the future.

It was difficult for me to deal with someone his age who was facing death. Furthermore, many of the doctors would tell me that I was wasting my time on the dying when I should be spending it with those who would live. They told me I was getting *too* involved.

However I felt strongly within that although little could be done for him medically, my responsibilities did not end

there. Somehow I had to help this young man to face this crisis in his life.

He had had a large part of his brain removed making it difficult for him to do even the simplest tasks, to read and write and so on. However, he still understood everything that was going on. I was often able to share with him how I tried to live the present moment, taking one thing at a time. This was a concept that my patient understood very well. He began to live it, taking one moment at a time. Slowly his countenance changed from a constant expression of gloom



to one of peace.

The psychiatrist, the neurologist my other colleagues could not understand why he was no longer deeply depressed in the face of such a tragedy. I stood by him to the end.

At another time I had a patient who was Vietnam war veteran. He was

schizophrenic, a drug addict and an alcoholic. He did not

fit into any of the

hospital programs. He

was not eligible for the

alcoholic ward because of

his drug problems. The drug

abuse program turned him

down because of his mental

problems. The psychiatric ward

refused him because of drug

addiction.

The first day I met this man

he told me that he was hearing

voices that were telling him to

kill me and everyone else who

was trying to help him. I was

really scared but I felt that I

had to continue to try to help

him. He reminded me of Jesus

Crucified and Abandoned.

Together with the social

worker we began a long search

for a place for him. It seemed

that society had nothing for

him; and, to make matters

worse, he refused to go to

most places saying that he

didn't like them. I knew I

had to go on loving.

Little by little I was able to help him to ignore the "voices" and to interact with the other patients, with the social worker and with me. Finally we were able to find a place that he accepted. The day of his departure from the hospital he asked for me. He wanted to thank me for all that I had done for him. Everyone found this to be rather extraordinary behavior for someone as disturbed as he was, but I knew that it was simply the behavior of someone who had felt loved and who wanted to return it in some way.

More recently I had a patient who had just found out she had a renal disease which had progressed rapidly requiring her to be dialysis dependent. She was extremely depressed. As a consequence she refused all our help and was very difficult to work with.

Then one day the ultimate happened. She decided that life on a dialysis machine was unacceptable to her and would not undergo the surgery required to have her body prepared for the machine. She was, in essence, pronouncing her own death sentence because she would not be able to survive without dialysis.

I tried to talk with her. She refused and became hostile. Finally I had to call in a psychiatrist to evaluate her and decide if she was in a proper state of mind to make this decision. If the psychiatrist found her to be incompetent then she would be forced to have the surgery. If they found that she knew what she was saying then she would be allowed to die.

The psychiatric evaluation stated that this woman was severely depressed but able to make this choice.

I had to accept the fact that this woman, who was relatively young, was choosing to die. Or did I? I decided right there and then that love demanded effort on my part. I continued to try, and try harder. I sat with her for a long time and told her that I felt she was giving up too soon; that she would still have many good years ahead of her.

From that moment on, I intensified my efforts. The more hostile she was towards me, the more I tried to love her, practically, also by doing for her many little, menial tasks she asked of me and that I could have very well refused to do.

One day she finally burst into tears. "You are young," she told me, "you don't understand that I have no reason to live and enjoy life."

I remained silent. I knew the war was over.

After a few moments in fact she went from tears to laughter. "You know Doctor," she said, "the only thing you haven't done for me in these days is play the violin." "If I could, I would," I answered. By now she knew that it was true.

That day she decided to give life on a dialysis a chance.

As I look back on this past year, on one hand I have the impression that nothing has changed because each day at the hospital brings with it some new tragedy, one worse than the other. However, I have come to realize that my

drop of love is like a drop of oil that does make a difference for a machine.

E.V.

1) See inside back cover.

Education

Getting the message across

At mid-semester I was assigned a "Basic Skills" class in English in the public school where I teach. Basic Skills refers to the programmed instruction for those students who either have previously failed the course, or who are expected to have difficulty with it. I was warned that nobody had been enthused with *Antigone* or *Macbeth*; rather everybody was just biding time until the year passed by.

Two of the boys were seniors, and for both of them this was the last class they had to pass in order to graduate. When I walked into the classroom for the first time, these two looked at each other, then back at me and the shorter one said audibly, "This will be a piece of cake."

His name was Fred. Every day he would saunter to the back of the room, slam his chair against the concrete wall, lean back and pull his cap down low over his eyes. He never had a pen, paper or book.

Jim, on the other hand, was an enormous fellow, co-owner of a family restaurant, anxious to get out of school so that he could concentrate on suppor-

"What is needed is a new social conscience. We need to realize that humanity is one world-wide family, and live accordingly..."

Chiara Lubich at the International New Humanity Day for Economy and Work, held in Rome, June 3, 1984

ting his wife and baby girl. He would come in whistling, pick up a chair, drop it in the back row and begin a series of one-liners, cheerfully pointing out possible improvements in method, discipline and instruction.

They had one thing in particular in common. Come test-taking time, both invariably scored in the 90's although in class they never knew the answers to the very same questions. Accordingly, both students were moved, distant from each other, to the front row. Immediately their grades sank even though they continued trying to cheat.

I really didn't know what to do. I kept asking myself how I could help them take a step towards being honest. In class I would highlight the values that surfaced in the readings, underlining the integrity in the hero, and so on—all in as low-key manner as possible. It seemed that neither one was hearing me until one day, walking out, Fred paused by my desk and said, "What you're aiming at, Miss, ain't *never* gonna happen." Jim, on the

other hand, pretended to be blissfully ignorant of the situation.

I was ready to give up when a thought occurred to me. If I really loved Jesus in them, I would be able to see them with new eyes every day.

Shortly afterwards the right chance to speak to them surfaced: Fred was put in detention for cutting classes. This left Jim on his own in the room. At the end of the period I asked him to step outside and he good-naturedly got up and came into the corridor. I told him, "Look Jim, I don't have a lot to say, just this: in a few days I'm going to be gone, so in the long run I don't matter at all. What *does* matter is that you'll be going home with yourself. You've got to live with *your* conscience, with whatever's between you and..." There I stopped.

He looked hot and flushed, but in his eyes it seemed that he was actually considering not the embarrassing situation, not even the cheating, but the reality behind the words. I went back into the classroom to let him think. In a little bit he came back in,

picked up his books and left.

That same day I spoke with Fred in the detention center. I said basically the same thing—that soon school would be over and, for all intents and purposes, I would be “dead and gone” (he looked relieved). The bottom line was that he had to get squared away with himself, with his conscience. I told him that furthermore, knowing him, I felt *sure* he’d do it. He just stared at me in disbelief. He realized fully well that graduation was just eight days away which meant that the final exam was in five. Both he and Jim were failing. Their only hope was to pass the final exam.

For the next two days, they both sat sullenly in class, listening to the review. The third and fourth days they didn’t appear. On the day of their final exam they returned, coming into the room independently of each other. Jim, true to form, picked up his desk with one hand and let it drop in the back of the room. Then he carefully placed his book on the top bookshelf and proceeded to roll up his sleeves.

His arms were clean of all writing.

Fred, on the other hand, had already come in wearing a sweatshirt with the sleeves cut off—against school policy, but again the message was clear. He too picked up his desk, swinging it up to show that nothing was stuck on the bottom. The bell rang, I passed out the exam. Jim thumbed through the test and went pale. Fred started chewing on his pencil; they both began to sweat. It was a long period.

They wrote until the bell rang, turned in their papers and walked out without a word, but with an air of achieved dignity.

I graded their tests immediately, sweating myself. Fred passed on the line, with a flat D-. Jim passed with two points.

I had not realized what an accomplishment was Fred’s graduation until the night he walked out on stage and the 2,500 students present began a standing ovation, stomping

and whistling, “Way to go, Fred! You made it Fred!”

Jim, waiting to go on stage, stepped out of line, his face solemn. He walked over, bowed and said simply, “Thank you.”

On the last day of school Fred returned, his face shining with the first smile I had ever seen on it. He stopped in front of me and said frankly, “Thanks. I never thought I’d be that honest.”

R.G.

Economy and work

Then we were two

I work in Naples, Italy as a mechanic in a metalwork shop where every day is spent amidst tensions of every kind—political, union, economic, social—that in effect divide the workers and promote disunity between workers and supervisors.

It was there that I met Pietro. He had only been there for a short time, working in the area next to mine. I couldn’t help noticing his attitude. He greeted with a smile all those who came up to him; he was never too busy for anyone.

Soon I found myself opening up to him and telling him all about myself, not only about problems on the job, but also about personal problems, about my life and my family. I told him things I never dreamed I would tell anyone.

One day I asked him why he acted the way he did. He told

me about the experience of unity he was trying to live together with many others, about his “encounter” with God-Love, that is, his understanding of God as a loving Father. I immediately wanted to do the same so then there were two of us on the job trying to be open to the others.

Each morning, before work began, we renewed our “pact” and throughout the day the difficulties we encountered became springboards to a greater love for every neighbor.

There was one person who worked near us who was particularly distracted on the job, very closed in on himself. Strengthened by Pietro’s unity I approached this person and asked him if there was anything I could do to help. “There’s nothing wrong,” was his reply. But later, during a



United Nations

break, he told me about a very painful situation he was involved in with his girlfriend. It seemed that she was pregnant and that the doctor had advised her to get an abortion.

As he was talking I tried to listen to him with all my attention, taking his problem upon myself, as if it were my own. As he talked he seemed more and more relieved to the point that as we got up to go back to work he said, "I know now that an abortion would be very wrong... we will never go through with it." Coming from him these words were particularly meaningful. I knew that he didn't believe in God

and that during the referendum on abortion he had taken a very active part in favor of it.

From that moment on our relationship totally changed. Now he always greets me in the morning, something he never used to do. He has offered me coffee and always has many questions which reveal his deep-felt desire to know God.

There are often very serious difficulties in the factory. Recently they started to talk about possible layoffs. This created great fear and tension among the workers. Some of them had the idea of slowing

down the work presently in progress so that it would last as long as possible. They wanted others to do the same.

Pietro and I both knew the situation was bad but we felt we could not go along with this solution. Rather than simply saying no, we set out to find another solution. We decided to approach some of the supervisors with whom we had established a good rapport and together with them seek to resolve the problem.

The result was this: they found new contracts and the much-feared layoffs did not take place.

M.P.

Santaji, the Guru

by RAVINDRA CHEEDA

The inhabitants of a small village in India were divided by age-old quarrels until, one day, a Christian guru arrived...



Sr. Christian Molitor

A typical hut of the region of the Konkan in India.

Small and thin, with clear, bright eyes and dressed in an Indian style tunic and trousers, Santaji certainly appeared to be an interesting character. And he became even more interesting when you discovered his profession. In fact, it's one

of the first things that come to your mind when you think of India. Yes, Santaji is a guru.

Let's make one thing clear right away, however. Guru in Sanskrit means "teacher", "spiritual guide" and, as everyone knows, India is a fertile

land for religion and meditation, and gurus have never been lacking there. They can be found in every corner of this immense country and, throughout the centuries, they have taught a wide range of philosophies.

The word guru, however, immediately conjures up visions of the mysterious religion Hinduism, a religion that has left many people perplexed and amazed at its incredible capacity to adapt and survive throughout the forty-five centuries of India's troubled history.

This is exactly what makes Santaji's story so interesting. He is a Christian, or more precisely, a Roman Catholic, united to the Church and well instructed in its teachings.

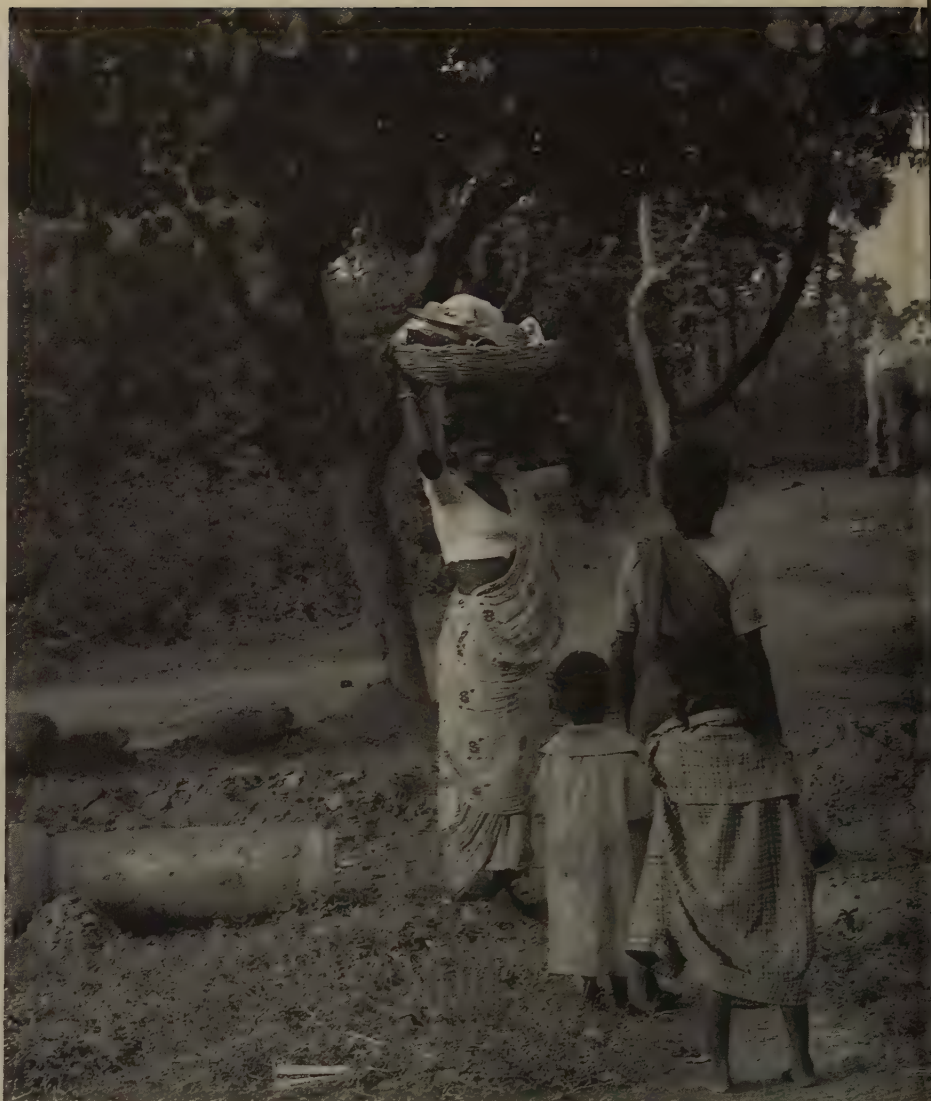
He is certainly not the only Catholic to have taken up this profession. There have been others, some who are more famous and who have traveled to India from different countries, for example, the English Benedictine Bede Griffith, or the German Proksh. Santaji, however, was born and raised in India in the Konkan region between Bombay and Goa.

He is married and has one son, Prashant, who was born three years ago on Holy Saturday. He and his wife, Angelina, and their son live in Belewadi, a small rather typical Indian village made up of huts sprinkled here and there throughout the region of the Konkan.

"You can only get there by foot," he explained to us, "after an eighteen hour bus trip from Bombay. If you're lucky, you might be able to catch a ride on a buffalo-drawn wagon."

There are very few Catholics in Belewadi and in the other neighboring villages. Why would there be need of a Catholic guru?

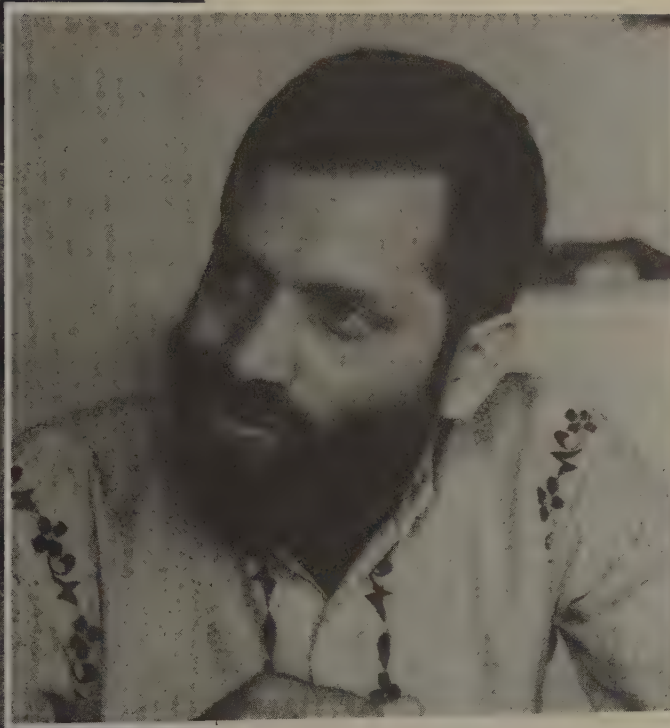
Santaji's story is, in fact, fascinating. Just listening to



it brings to mind the great callings we read about in the Old Testament.

"I was born in a little village," he began, "and my family was very poor." He went on to tell of his father who was an alcoholic and who constantly beat Santaji's mother and his brothers and sisters. The main event of Santaji's life, he told us, was his "call from God."

"When I sensed this calling from God," he confided, "I thought of becoming a Jesuit. But after a few years in the seminary the Rector called me into his office and said, 'Listen, Santaji, your family is going to ruin. We must be careful to do the will of God even in these things. Perhaps God wants something else from you. Perhaps it would be best if you returned home to take care of



"It's certainly unusual and interesting to work among these people, taking care of the sick, helping the people to solve their problems and often speaking to them about Jesus." Left: Santaji, the Guru.

with a priest and he made what I felt was a rather unusual suggestion: 'Santaji, why don't you go and live among the people of Belewadi. There are very few Catholics there and you know something about the culture and the Hindu life of those people.'

"Soon after that I found myself among these people, and not long after that I married Angelina who didn't mind the idea of being a guru's wife, and we began to work together.

"It's certainly unusual and interesting to work among these people, taking care of the sick, helping the people to solve their problems and often speaking to them about Jesus.

"To do this I use a technique that is commonly known in

these parts. It is used in Hinduism and is called "kirtans." It is a weaving together of lengthy songs and ballads through which I tell the people about the Gospel. Hundreds, sometimes thousands of Hindus come to listen and these "sessions" can last the whole night.

"We also organize pilgrimages; they are typical of our culture and it doesn't matter whether a person is Christian or Hindu. Each year about ten of us set out by foot from the village heading for Goa where the body of St. Frances Xavier is buried.

We walk along singing and sharing with one another whatever we might be feeling or living through in that moment. When we enter a village the inhabitants always run out to meet us offering us something to eat and a place to sleep. They always ask us who we are and where we're going and we end up explaining to them our pilgrimage, telling them about Jesus and about St. Frances.

"The trip is four days there and four days back. This year there will be even more of us. The bishop heard about our

your family.' It was a shock for me, but I returned home and shortly thereafter my father died leaving me as the head of the household. I had two sisters who would soon need a dowry in order to get married, and two younger brothers who were still in school. Somehow everything worked out.

"One day, however, I sensed that the original calling from God was still there. I talked

pilgrimage and he asked our group to pass through some other villages that are even farther away so that we could tell the people about this experience."

"There was also another important moment in my life," Santaji told us. "In August of 1982 I was invited to go to a small apartment in Bombay. There I met four people who were living the spirituality of the Focolare. Afterwards I met many others of the Movement. At first I didn't understand what it was all about. They didn't live like me in my little village. Yet, in the days that I spent with them, I came to understand that they had found something I had always been searching for: a way to reach sanctity.

"You see," he continued, twisting himself into a yoga position we could never have matched, "I had always wanted to reach holiness, but once I was out of the seminary and married I didn't know how I could ever make it. There, among my new friends, however, I found single people, married people, priests, seminarians—all had found this direct route, the Gospel, and in particular the commandment of mutual love.

"As a guru coming from a small village I felt understood by a person there who was a dentist and again by a person who was the director of a large company, a name I had only read about in the papers.

"I said to myself: 'This is a community just like those of the early Christians'. I wanted to be one of them. They told me, however, to return to my

village and to live, with my family and with the people of my village, what I had understood in the days spent together. I tried it and it worked. I was not the same guru anymore. This large family of the Focolare, even though far from my village, is always close to me with its support. Whenever I can, I go to Bombay in order to be 'recharged', then I set off again for the streets of my village.

"I guess you could say I'm a 'new' guru, and by that I mean that what I have to offer my people now is something that others don't have, this life of mutual love, this life of unity."

The way that Santaji uses to spread this life is certainly original, and it couldn't be otherwise. "I have to 'make myself one' with these people, as my friends in the Focolare say. For example, a few months ago I found out that in another village, where there were many Catholics, things weren't going too well. Age-old family quarrels had brought about division. Fights were breaking out. Many people had left the Church.

"I left for this place right away and when I got there I spent several days just talking with the people, trying to understand the situation. All to no avail. Then it hit me that as a guru I had other means at my disposal, like fasting. I began a week-long fast, letting the people of the village know that unity must return to that place. They implored me to stop, but I continued until the evening when the whole village was gathered together in the little Church around their pastor. Many went to confession. At

Mass a pact to live together as one united family was made. The atmosphere of the whole village has changed."

You could listen to Santaji for days. Many, we have heard, now want to visit Santaji's village and see how Christians and Hindus live together in peace. The visitors are priests, nuns, seminarians, lay people: all anxious to hear about ways of making Christianity understandable to Hindus.

"The fact is," Santaji explained, "that I don't even know where to put all these people. We just don't have room."

A few months ago his house even collapsed and for four months he lived under a tree with Angelina and Prashant. Now, however, they have a new house, a small one though, too small to offer hospitality to all the people who would like to come.

Santaji is convinced that God has truly chosen him, and that he has a plan for him and for many others. "There is no rush," he concluded, looking off into the distance with an air of great peace. The things of God cannot be rushed. Who knows what his plan might be!"

One thing is certain: Santaji's work is part of a plan that is much greater than he himself, a plan that encompasses and surpasses even the great family he discovered a year or so ago. In this family in India, for example, there is Vincent, the dentist; Brian who works in advertising; Glen who is a priest; Owen, the mechanic; Brian, the electrician and many others ... including Santaji, the guru. □

THE CHILDREN OF LASCAHOBAS

by VERA GIANNINI

From far away there is someone who cares for the children of Lascahobas, a small town near Port au Prince, Haiti. Someone who has found many practical ways to express her concern and love.



Estelle Dubuisson with some of the children of Lascahobas.

They are looking up at us from the pages of a photo album: small children up to twelve years old, rather small and frail looking, some smiling, some a little puzzled and shy—all blessed with the charm and appeal of children all over the world. There is Micheline in her oversized yellow dress and the headscarf she would never part with; there is August, a bit camera-shy, wondering what it is all about; little Josemene who definitely doesn't like to have her picture taken...

They are all Haitian children, from a town called Lascahobas, which is very small (pop.

25,000), very isolated, and very, very poor. But these children are lucky, because someone cares for them very much. She sees to it that they get at least one meal a day, that they get the health care they never had before, and even makes it possible for them to go to school. She is someone, they know, who will never let them down.

Her name is Estelle Dubuisson, a native of Lascahobas herself, and these are "her" beloved children whom she follows, one by one, as the photo album testifies.

Ever since she came to the United States, in 1954, she tried to do something for her hometown. She had barely settled down and found a job as a Medical Laboratory Technologist, when she went around to collect money from her colleagues at the Veteran's Hospital to help build the church in her home parish. That first time she came up with one dollar from each, exactly \$70, which she rounded out by adding another \$30 of her own and sent it to the priest. But, as her co-workers soon found out, that was only the beginning of her fundraising activities. After the church there was the problem of school supplies for the parish school and then, after a heart-breaking experience, came the children.

Estelle Dubuisson had often gone back to visit Lascahobas with suitcases full of clothing and gifts for the community, but when, in 1976, she decided to spend three full weeks there, her eyes opened for the first time to the true dimension of



her people's plight. "I just couldn't take what I saw," she recalled. "So many children dying, women dying at childbirth because they couldn't reach medical help. So I was determined to help them."

The people of Lascahobas were isolated, Mrs. Dubuisson explained, because most of the land, once fertile and beautiful, is now buried under water since the electrical power plant was built there in the fifties.

So, even though Lascahobas is only forty-five miles from Port au Prince, the capital, it takes at least three to three and a half hours to get there by car. And since the nearest hospital is in Port au Prince, there is no way to get there fast enough in case of emergency. That's why one of

Mrs. Dubuisson's top priorities was to raise the money for an ambulance.

She did, to the tune of \$11,105, plus the shipping expenses, for which she had to take out a personal loan. But all this came later, when, after overcoming endless difficulties, the ambulance arrived in Lascahobas on December 23, 1981, a miraculous Christmas present.

But first, things had to get organized here in New York. Mrs. Dubuisson realized that this was a project too big for her to handle by herself, so the first thing she did upon her return was to enlist the help of Dr. Josephine English, her gynecologist. Together they founded an organization called "Friends of the Children of Lascahobas, Haiti" or FCLH

"After overcoming endless difficulties, the ambulance arrived in Lascahobas on December 23, 1981, a miraculous Christmas present."

which eventually, in 1980, was officially recognized by the Internal Revenue as a non profit organization. It is still a small outfit, made up of about twelve very devoted, active members, with Estelle Dubuisson as president and Dr. John Mitchell, Professor of Ophthalmology at Columbia University as vice president.

Under the leadership of their president, the group arranged dinner dances, discos (with the showing of films and slides of Lascahobas), raffles and the sale of Haitian art, and slowly the money came together. By the end of January 1982, the first medical team, headed by Dr. Mitchell, arrived at Lascahobas for the first time. They were all volunteers, paying their own way.

During that first visit they examined 480 patients, distributed 350 pairs of eye glasses, and performed thirteen cataract operations. After one week's stay, the team left on Sunday for New York, while Estelle Dubuisson, who had accompanied them to Port au Prince to see them off, returned to Lascahobas.

On Monday morning she was up early and went out into the streets to watch the children go to school. Then, after the school bell rang for the last time and all disappeared to their respective classrooms, Mrs. Dubuisson walked about the town to see who was left behind. Like the land owner in the Gospel, who gathered the workers for his vineyard among the men standing around idle in the market place, she looked for the children who had not gone to school. She did not ask them why they were hanging around. She just picked them up, about fifty of them (the following year their number grew to 90 and now they are 130), and sent them to a small wooden house to get some food.

It was actually her own house, the house left to her by her father, and it was the place where the new Child Care Center was born. Monday through Friday they came to receive their one and only meal of the day... "Believe me, I never had such a day as that first day," said Mrs. Dubuisson.

But when she got back to the U.S., the news from the Center was not good: "The children

are still getting sick, they are still dying," wrote the woman left in charge.

"But why are they dying?" Estelle asked herself in dismay, "why, now that they have food?" She found out later that 90 per cent of them had intestinal infestation and malaria. With the help of a pediatrician she was able to send the necessary medication.

In 1983 she followed up the tests, added new ones and extended them to all the children who had not been tested before.

Since then, all the needed medical supplies have been distributed through the dispensary. Each child now has a card with his or her own name, age, and instructions for the medication they must take. Mrs. Dubuisson follows them one by one.

As of 1983, FCLH started to send some of the children to school, twenty-five, age six, who go to three different schools: the Catholic one run by Sisters, the National School which is run by the Government, and the Seventh Day Adventist school. The first two are free, while the latter, which is a private school, usually charges for the registration, school supplies and uniforms. "In the case of our children," said Mrs. Dubuisson, "the school was very generous, accepting almost all of them free of even these charges."

In Haiti there is even a charge for the children's birth certificates; many parents are too poor to even register them and many children (in 1980 one

(Continued on page 28)

A Demanding Ideal

We are continuing our series of questions presented by the young people at Genfest '85 on various contemporary topics.

IS THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY?

Question: Many young people today like to work for peace or for the preservation of the environment, etc. Can the Gospel offer a solution also to the problems of today's youth?

Youth from several northern European countries



Silvana Veronesi answering one of the questions presented by the young people of the Focolare Movement at Genfest '85 held recently in Rome. Opposite page: Performers at the Genfest.

Answer: The Gospel is good for every age; furthermore, there seems to be a great affinity between the Gospel and young people.

The Gospel offers a totally unique ideal; and aren't young people usually searching for an ideal to which they can devote themselves? They want a demanding ideal, and the Gospel offers a demanding ideal.

When they read in the Gospel that "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends"¹ they are attracted by these words because this kind of all-committing generosity is part of their nature.

The Gospel contains "words of life."² It demands a response from our life. In fact, all of Jesus' words are meant to become life of our life. It's not enough just to think about them or read them or meditate on them. They must also be lived.³ And young people are ready for action; they want to get things done.

Furthermore, young people, who strongly desire to change the world around them, know that a life lived according to the Gospel is what is needed. In fact, just one sentence of the Gospel put into practice would be enough to bring about radical and concrete changes.

"Blessed are the meek..." "Blessed are the peace-makers..."⁴ Aren't these sure ways to build a lasting peace? "Love one another..."⁵—Jesus' new commandment—isn't it the most powerful means at our disposal to break down the barriers existing between different nations, peoples, races?

The Gospel is *the* book, the code of life from which young people today can take their inspiration for that civilization of love which is primarily their task to build.

Silvana Veronesi

1) Jn. 15:13; 2) Phil. 2:15; 3) Cf. Mt. 7:24-27; 4) Mt. 5:5,9; 5) Jn. 13:34.

JOURNEYING TOWARDS GOD: INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY?

Question: Christians in India seem to emphasize more the relationship of each individual with God. On the other hand we feel we should go to God together. How can these two aspects meet?

A group of gen from Asia

Answer: It is true. Everywhere in the Church, but especially in the Orient, the personal aspect present in our relationship comes more into relief,

Going to God alone—through silence, recollection, solitude and so on—leads Christians to union with God within themselves. However there is no spiritual journey which is purely individual because Christians, as members of the ecclesial community, also go to God with others.

The other aspect of a Christian's relationship with God, that is, the communitarian aspect, has always been present to a greater or lesser degree in Christianity. Nowadays, however, it seems to be coming forward as a fundamental need.

In the experience of the Focolare Movement for example, certain words were strongly emphasized from the very beginning. "These words," Chiara Lubich said, "bring about a Christian way of life which is not so much individual as collective, communitarian. They are phrases that refer to love for the poor, love for our enemies, for everyone, and in particular sentences that referred to mutual love, to unity."¹

We tried to put these words into practice, to love one another as Jesus said, ready even to give our life for one another, and in the meantime to share everything, the sufferings and the joys, holding all



our spiritual and material goods in common.

But "where charity and love abide, God abides."² Therefore, the more people loved their neighbor, the more each one felt the presence of God within him or her. And, since their love was mutual, God, who was present in each one of us, was present in our rapport with one another, in our unity, as well. We experienced the truth of those other words of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in their midst."³

Here, in this life of mutual love, in this life of unity, we experience both aspects of our relationship with God: the individual one and the communitarian one. They compound one another and strengthen each other. In fact, as we continue to live the mutual love asked for by Jesus, our individual union with God, and also the union of all of us together with God, grows. Moreover, the greater is the presence of God among us, the more deeply each one of us experiences a personal relationship with him.

Merisa Cerini

1) From an interview of the RAI Television with Chiara Lubich, April 17, 1978; 2) from the liturgy of Holy Thursday; 3) Mt. 18:20.

WORD OF LIFE

AUGUST

"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you."

(Jn. 6:27)

After having fed the crowds through the multiplication of loaves and fishes near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus slipped away to the other side of the lake, to Capernaum, in order to escape the crowd that wanted to make him king. All the same there were many who looked for and found him. Jesus, however, did not accept their enthusiastic but self-seeking motivation. They had eaten the miraculous bread, but had seen in that event only their personal, material gain. They did not recognize the deep significance of that bread which revealed Jesus as the one sent by the Father in order to give true life to the world. But to them Jesus was only a wonder-worker, an earthly messiah who could give them food cheaply and in abundance. It is in this context that Jesus tells them:

"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you."

The "food that endures" is the person of Jesus and also his teachings, since the teachings of Jesus and his person are one and the same. If we read further, we see that this "food that endures" is also identified with the eucharistic body of Jesus. For this reason we can say that the "food that endures" is Jesus in person, who gives himself to us in his word and in the Eucharist.

"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you."

The symbol of bread, and also of water, is often used in the Bible. Bread and water represent the primary and essential foods for human life. By applying the symbol of bread to himself, Jesus affirmed that his person, his teachings are indispensable to a person's spiritual life in the same way that bread is indispensable for physical life.

Bread as food is certainly necessary. Jesus even provided it miraculously for the crowds. By itself, however, it is not enough. The human person carries within himself or herself—perhaps without being fully aware of it—a hunger for truth, justice, goodness, love, purity, light, peace, joy, a hunger for the infinite, for the eternal, a hunger that nothing in the world can satisfy. Jesus offers himself as the one who alone can satisfy our inner hunger.

"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you."

In presenting himself as the "bread of life", however, Jesus did not limit himself to affirming our need to nourish ourselves with him, in other words that we must

believe in his words in order to have eternal life. He is urging us to experience him; he tells us to work for food that doesn't perish, thus extending a very compelling invitation. He is saying that we have to do all we can, utilize every possible resource in order to obtain this food. Jesus does not impose himself on us; rather he wants to be discovered, he wants to be experienced.

Certainly by our strength alone we are not able to reach Jesus. We can do it only by means of a gift from God. Nonetheless, Jesus continually invites us to leave ourselves open to the gift of himself that he wants to give. It is precisely by striving to put his word into practice that we reach the fullness of faith in him and can "taste his word" almost as we would taste a flavorful piece of bread.

"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you."

The word of life for this month is not emphasizing a particular aspect of Jesus' teaching such as forgiving offenses, being detached from wealth and so on. Instead, it is bringing us to the very root of Christian life, that is, our personal relationship with Jesus.

I think that those who have begun to live the words of Jesus with commitment, and

WORD OF LIFE

SEPTEMBER

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

(Mk. 9:35)

above all his commandment of love of neighbor which is the synthesis of all God's words and of all his commandments, cannot help but notice, at least in some small way, that Jesus is the "bread" of their life. He is the one who fulfills every desire of their heart, he is the source of their joy, of their light. By putting the word of God into practice they have experienced it to be the true answer to the problems of humanity and of the world. Then, if Jesus, the "bread of life" makes the supreme gift of himself in the Eucharist, it comes spontaneously for them to go and receive the Eucharist with love and it occupies a very important place in their hearts.

Those of us who have had this stupendous experience cannot keep this discovery to ourselves, but rather—with the same concern with which Jesus urges us to obtain the "bread of life"—we should communicate it to others so that many may find in Jesus all that their hearts have been searching for. It would be an enormous act of love for our neighbors so that they too can know what the real life is already here on earth. They will then have the life that doesn't die. And what more could we possibly want?

Chiara Lubich

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

While Jesus was on his way towards Jerusalem, where death on the cross was awaiting him, the apostles who were following him at a brief distance were arguing over which one of them was the greatest. He was well aware of what they were discussing so he called them to him and said: "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

Then he took a little child (children at that time in Jewish society had no rights and were considered of no particular importance), set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them: "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; ... welcomes ... the one who sent me" (Mk. 9:37).

With these words, and through this gesture, Jesus wanted to express his thought, that those who would want to be first must be the servants of all and in particular of the "least."

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

We have before our eyes a wonderful scene that immediately sparks off a number of

considerations. First of all we remain struck by the contrast between the figure of Jesus and that of the apostles. Jesus' heart was burning with the desire to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by the Father even though he knew that this would mean his death. The apostles, instead, are taken with petty ambition and with merely earthly projects. They argue about who will have the first place in the Kingdom and among the disciples. It reveals that they had understood very little about Jesus or about the nature of the new Kingdom he had come to bring.

They loved Jesus, however; they had left everything in order to follow him. They argued about who would get the first place, because each one of them—even if their love was not very enlightened and was mixed with worldly interests—would have liked to be as close to Jesus as possible.

This is why Jesus, who knew well what was in their hearts, did not cut them off. Rather he corrected them, purified their feelings and helped them to understand that being "first" in his Kingdom, being close to him, did not depend on the role given to them by the Father in this Kingdom. It depended on having the same sentiments, on having made the same choice as Jesus (cf. Mk. 10:40).

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

These words, while they contained a lesson that Jesus wanted to give the apostles, at the same time explained to them who he was. The argument that arose among the apostles gave Jesus the opportunity to reveal the most intimate, most hidden aspect of his soul, his preferences, his way, his line of action which is so different from ours. He chose to change the world not by starting from the top, climbing to power, taking over the controls, but by starting from the bottom, taking the last place. He chose to change the world through love, putting himself at the service of the little ones, of the poor, of the least.

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

Any society, any community—therefore also the spiritual community that Jesus was founding—since it is made up of people who live on this earth, needs an organization and the structures that enable it to accomplish the goals it has set out to reach, and to provide for the concrete needs of its members. There is need for a visible hierarchy, that is, for people who are responsible for various tasks and services.

However, in the new logic introduced by Jesus, the one that stands at the foundation of his community, the place that a person occupies, their position in this community is completely secondary. What counts is to think and act like Jesus; to chose the last place, to put oneself at the service of the least. In fact, for Jesus, even authority has no meaning if it is not service, an expression of love.

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

It is clear here that Jesus is aiming at the complete reversal of that overbearing, self-seeking attitude that exists within every heart and that gnaws away at and contaminates even the most noble and holy initiatives.

We will fulfill the plan God has for each one of us not by trying to impose ourselves, but by putting ourselves in the last place. If we do this, something similar to what happened to Jesus will happen to us. He annihilated himself out of love for others and he unleashed that charge of love that revolutionized the world.

"If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."

How can we put this word into practice? By choosing, as Jesus did, the last place in the

countless opportunities that are offered to us throughout the day. Have we been entrusted with a task of a certain importance? We shouldn't feel like we are "someone." There should be no room left for pride. Instead we should remember that the most important thing is to love our neighbor. Let us take advantage of the position we might have in order to serve our neighbor better, without neglecting the "little things" of our life, without overlooking personal relationships, simple everyday duties, help to our parents, peace and harmony in the family, the upbringing of our children...

Yes, whatever happens we must remember that Christianity means to love and in a special way to prefer the least.

If we live this way, our life will be a constant contribution to the building of the Kingdom of God here on earth, and for this effort Jesus has promised everything else in abundance: health, goods, everything ... to be distributed to others. Thus we become the arms of God's providence for many. It will mean entering into God's logic, undertaking a divine adventure of which we will never be able to explain the beauty, the fascination, the usefulness, the advantages for many, many others both in this life and in the next.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following
are experiences
in living the Gospel
which some of our readers
have shared with us.

"FROM DEATH TO LIFE"

Recently a person I knew wronged me and offended me very deeply. It was doubly hard to accept because it was all entirely unexpected. What made the whole situation even more difficult was the fact that on account of what was happening I found myself in quite a predicament with other people as well.

My first reaction was to set things straight by stating my rights. I did it, but nothing changed.

The second one was to accept what was happening as the cross I was called to embrace. I did this, too, but not quite completely. I realized that the heaviness I felt in me was because I was hoping that by showing God my love he would fix the situation for me.

The word of life of that month was: "We have passed out of death and into life, and of this we can be sure because we love our brothers" (1 Jn. 3:14).

As I read it over, my particular difficulty came to my mind very vividly, and I realized then that either I loved or I didn't, and there were no short cuts to be taken. The situation demanded that I pass from death to life by loving my neighbor, and

my neighbor was the person who had wronged me. As soon as I understood what I had to do I began to pray with all my heart for my friend, wishing her all possible good, asking God that the wrong I had suffered might bear positive fruits also in her life.

When I called her back I realized that she was deeply embarrassed over what had happened. She told me that she too had prayed for me and I know that she was also hoping that peace could remain between us.

Peace has remained and I found a new life in me as Jesus promises, and also light which helped me to understand that "God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him" (Rm. 8:28).

Through this experience I understood that God wanted something else for me, something better, and more beautiful. It was really like going from death to life.

EVERYONE MEANS "EVERYONE"

The super in my building had been creating a lot of difficulties for me, and I had become convinced that he was really trying to make my life unpleasant so that I would leave my apartment. Whatever the

reason, however, I had reached the point that I dreaded having to go through the lobby because I knew that seeing him meant either another unpleasant remark or a subtle threat.

Unconsciously I began looking the other way when I saw him coming, or I walked by him as quickly as I could. But how can you single out someone and decide that you won't love him even if that person seems to be your enemy?

The moment I decided to forget my own resentment and treat him as a friend. I knew that love could conquer this battle, too. I decided in fact that I was going to treat him as if he really liked me, as if I were his favorite tenant.

Soon after that I even forgot about my dislike of this person because loving my neighbor had helped me to go from death to life, and when there is life, very little else matters.

But it seems that something happened to my "neighbor" as well. In a matter of weeks his attitude changed. I had acted as if he liked me, and he ended up doing exactly that.

One day, in fact, he stopped me at the door: "I want you to know I have nothing against you," he confided. "I really hope you'll be in this building for a long time."

Now we are the best of friends.

E.P.

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time. The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

The diplomacy of love

At 4:15 p.m. the phone rang. It was my husband calling to say he would not be home until late. My heart sank. Our guests were scheduled to arrive at 4:30. Their uncle, a very prominent man abroad, was in the States for a visit and they were anxious to introduce him to their American friends. My husband had agreed to be home at 4:15 to help with the last minute preparations and to greet our guests. Now he was saying he would be late.

Self-pity began to set in. Here I was with a baby underfoot (emptying the pepper shaker onto the carpeting!) and, as I started to set out the china and refreshments, I wondered when I would find the time to put fresh towels in the bathroom.

I was angry. I do not speak the native language of our friends, nor do they speak English well enough yet for us to carry on a friendly conversation. My husband, who was arriving late, would not be there to make them comfortable with his understanding of their language ... not to mention the honored guest they were bringing who, I was cer-

tain, would need an interpreter. Since my husband had helped to sponsor this family when they first arrived in the States, I suddenly saw them as his friends, not mine. I felt that his arrangements for the afternoon left me stuck with the full responsibility of their visit. Well, it would serve him right if the cork broke off in the wine bottle (and deep down I really hoped it would, as I vigorously twisted the corkscrew).

Just then, a little voice inside kept telling me that I had forgotten that the most important thing was to love, to try and make myself one with my husband. Doing this my anger began to leave me. Our unity was more important than the wine, or the bathroom towels, or even the language barrier.

The cork popped out of the wine bottle intact just as the doorbell heralded the arrival of our guests and their uncle. Our daughter immediately warmed the atmosphere with her latest antics, as I seated my guests and served the drinks.

Much to my surprise, their uncle spoke excellent English, and I was thoroughly en-

grossed in an animated discussion of his work in Africa when my husband walked in. Together, then we served the cake, entertained our guests' children, and laughed as their uncle tried to hold our squirming baby for a reluctant kiss.

Our friends had another engagement at 6:00, so we said our farewells with promises that we would spend more time together during their next visit.

As the door closed behind our guests, my husband burst out laughing and asked if I had seen him drop the lid of the coffee pot into the uncle's cup. When I said that I hadn't, he breathed a sigh of relief, asking, "Weren't you nervous? After all, we've never entertained a foreign diplomat in our home before!" I looked at him and realized that I hadn't been nervous at all; in fact, I had completely forgotten the diplomatic status of our visitor. Once I had overcome my own human nature and tried to love my husband and our friends, I had simply enjoyed the visit with a very charming family and their interesting uncle.

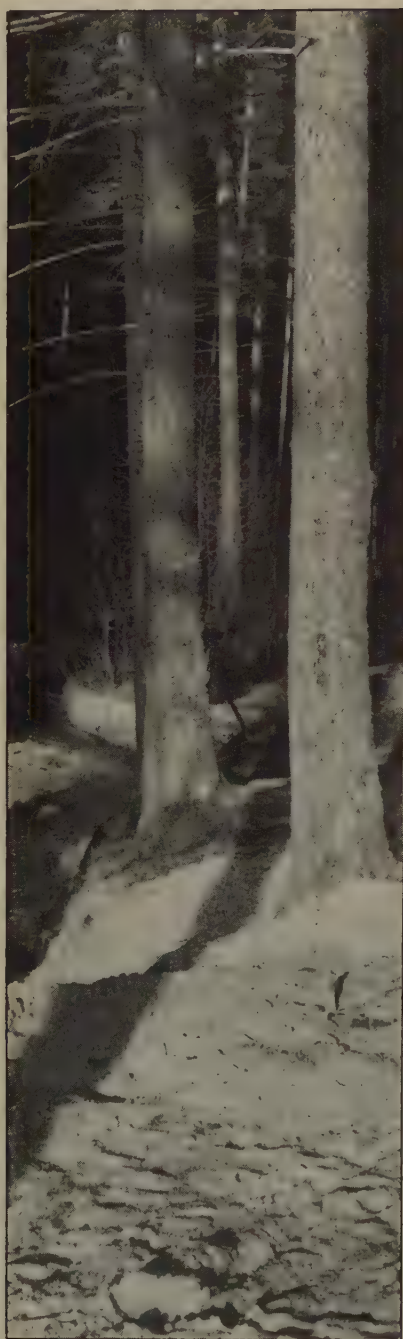
M.J.

Images
FOR
WORDS

"Those who do not go forward go backwards."
SAINT BERNARD

In the light of the present moment

Rosa, certain that the end was drawing near, concentrated on "preparing" herself for her encounter with God.



Rosa had to let those at Princeton High School know whether or not she would be going back there for the next school year.

"Although I am planning for the future, I will 'prepare a celebration' for Jesus Crucified and Forsaken whenever and however he comes my way," she said. "And I know that I have to be ready for him always."

A few days later, Rose wrote in her diary, *"Today I feel always more strongly the beauty of this vocation I have received. I am his little instrument. He wants it this way. He is all powerful. He will teach me to love him with all my heart and all my strength. He will teach me to respond to his graces and to love him...well, as a focolarina, in Chiara's footsteps."*

"I am really trying to embrace Jesus Crucified and Forsaken in every moment, asking him to help me 'let go of everything'. I have to keep this clear in my mind: the important thing, that which will count in the end, is how much love I have had for him."

An instrument in the shadows

Spring was approaching and nature's rebirth intensified Rosa's heartfelt desire to see the ideal she had chosen for her

life reach many others in Princeton. At times she really wished that she could work in a more 'visible' way to spread the Focolare spirituality.

"In the past few days I've been thinking that you've chosen me to be your instrument in the shadows," she wrote. "But even in the shadows one must be detached from many things, to die, to die to everything which doesn't contribute to your glory. I grieve for my human failings even though I can't always identify them. It is like living in darkness, knowing neither the good nor the wrong you do. However, at the same time I feel the strength of your will, your work, in me. I recollect myself in silence and adore you within me."

"Do whatever you want with me. My life is yours."

In mid-March Rosa noted in her diary, *"At Mass today I felt a strong need to see Jesus in my neighbor, to learn to see him all the time, always, in everyone. I looked around me. I fixed my eyes, and my heart (why not), and my soul on each person before me: 'Jesus, you are in each one of them'. I have to live like this always. But there is more to this than words can convey. It is loving*

him to such an extent that nothing, nothing can destroy that which the soul experiences, uniting itself to him in our neighbor.

"Jesus, I have to thank you for all the graces you have given me, for all your love, and your mercy. It is you who help me to love you to the point that I can recognize you in everyone."

The fulfillment of life

On May 16, Rosa's doctor sent her to have chest x-rays taken. "Whatever you want, Lord. Whatever you want," she said beforehand. That afternoon she heard that a Sister she knew had died early in the morning. "This news made me think about my own death," Rosa wrote that evening. "I see death as the fulfillment of life, as a moment of joy. I thought that in this world I will have the cross. No joys, perhaps... because my joy will come at that sublime moment when I'll see Jesus face to face."

The x-rays did not show that the cancer had spread any further.

On the last weekend in March Rosa attended a meeting of the Focolare community and stayed overnight in the Center. "It was like a miracle," she said later. "I had been feeling so sick, but he wanted me to go to that meeting and he prepared everything."

"My 'friend', that 'old friend' seems to be rapidly progressing. The pain is sharper, and it comes more often. Jesus, all my pain is nothing in comparison to what you have suffered for me, for all of us. Now is the time for me to suffer with you. Give me strength and grace. With you the cross will be

sweet and light. But don't leave me alone for a moment. You know that I am weak. Thank you, thank you, thank you for having given me this gift."

This was a period of constant pain and sleepless, seemingly endless, nights. In the beginning of April Rosa got up at 2:30 a.m. to record these notes in her diary: "I can see that I am not well. Is this just a passing thing, or is it the beginning of the end? I think about Jesus Forsaken a great deal. I ask him to have mercy on me, to make every moment I live a continuous act of love for him."

"I think of one of Chiara's writings where she speaks of the attitude of those who are in love with God—'a heart for a heart'—like this, as long as the flame is burning. Then, in the desolation and aridity, still, a desolate heart for the abandoned heart of Jesus. But always 'a heart for a heart.'"

"Jesus, if it is your will (and it seems that it is your will), I would like to be in your heart, suffering that pain, experiencing that sword piercing my flesh. I want to pay for whatever has to be paid. Jesus, your will be done!"

And again on April 25 she wrote, "My 'old friend' is keeping me company... Easter has gone by. There was so much sadness in my soul that day. I felt so sick. But I know one thing. I will embrace him, my Jesus Forsaken, and I will embrace him just as long as he wants. It is logical that this is the way for me, and that there is no other way. I have to pay not only for myself, but for all that has to be paid. I have asked this of him, and he is answering me. He is my Lord and my All!"



HOLY FAITH

I was suffering,
Each hour, a lament
on the clock of my life.

I was suffering,
And the weight of
my affliction
obscured all light.

Now,
sunlight is everywhere
The hour, the sun
on the clock of my joy.
Stars alight
with the order of my faith
Holy Faith!

From the shadows of my life
you have forged
a fragrant choice.

Each day I drink of it,
and relish the sweet mystic
of life.

The only thing that remains

On the feast of Pentecost Rosa was visited by many focolarini. "What a joy it was to see them!" Rosa writes. "What unity we had!"

"It is almost midnight," she wrote that same night in her diary. "The pain and general discomfort are increasing. I know now that the end is approaching. I feel confident in Jesus. What would life be without him? Thank you, Lord. Thank you!"

"I think it would be a good idea to prepare a cassette for the boys in my moments of solitude. What can I tell them now that the end is near for me? What can I tell them to imprint in their hearts my love for them? One thing among many I would like you to understand and remember forever: When the end is near, because of the mercy of God, many things are very clear in your hearts. I will be gone soon. What will I take with me? Certainly no material possessions, not even the ones I love, not even those who are flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood. The only thing that will remain is my relationship with God..."

Again during the month of May she wrote, *I have a great desire to be faithful to my vocation in every moment. I am so little! But Jesus knows this. He knows that the fulfillment of his plan for me depends entirely on him.*

"With my most recent operation last September and all the suffering that followed, all the bridges that I had to cross, I feel free, completely free. I have

given Mary the last thing I possessed—my children... Now I no longer have anything. And I want nothing more than to be faithful to my vocation. I still have a long way to go to 'let go of everything', but Jesus, who has done so much for me, will take care of this, too.

"My heart, my soul and my spirit are open to him. I believe in his love and mercy. He will give me the graces necessary to make my simple life an act of love for him, in unity with the whole Movement."

"Hours pass and days go by..."

Rosa was now confined to bed almost all day. Loretta and the other focolarine visited her daily, helping out with household chores, preparing meals or whatever needed doing. Whenever possible they would have meditation together, too and pray the rosary.

When she felt well enough Rosa would accompany Loretta to Mass at the University chapel, but even this effort was almost more than she could manage now.

In spite of the severe pain and nausea she felt in these days, Rosa still tried to record in her diary the story of her soul's journey toward God.

"Hours pass and days go by," she wrote at the end of the month, "and I feel the burden of my inactivity. Jesus, have pity on me. Give me your light if you want me to do small things, like writing this diary for instance, for your glory. My heart has no rest until it rests in you."

"I awaken at dawn every day, and it is beautiful to pray dur-

ing those hours when I am surrounded only by silence, when my soul is vibrant and happy, and my mind clear. I say my morning prayers then and talk to God. I extend the prayers, and pray the rosary. It all lasts one or one-and-a-half hours. These are the most beautiful moments of the day.

"I am with Jesus Forsaken most of the time now, even during Mass. Sometimes I don't even have the grace to offer him anything. This is a great suffering. There are so many crosses! I, myself, am the heaviest. Jesus, have mercy!"

Hope

Rosa was making a particular effort to live all the virtues. She chose one at a time and tried to put it into practice all day. "I think I'll choose 'Hope' tonight," she wrote at this time, "and I'll continue to practice it faithfully. Every coming moment—every present moment—new hope. Hope in him alone."

During those days when Rosa was extremely ill Eddie stayed with relatives. In early June she noted, "Eddie called me tonight. He is happy, and I prayed to Mary, 'He is in your Immaculate Heart. He is yours'."

"This evening, I wanted to go to Mass," she continues, "but I could not go. I felt so tired, so tired. I offered Jesus my suffering, this sacrifice. I offered it for someone who has never tasted real love for him. And I asked that all those praying before Mass, those talking to Jesus in the tabernacle, might glorify him and love him. And I felt that Jesus was hap-



*"Every coming moment, every present moment — a new hope.
Hope in him alone."*

py. He wants it to be this way. I haven't felt well lately. I'm experiencing more and more tiredness and pain. I ask Jesus and Mary to accept my nothingness for the glory of God, for the glory of the Work of Mary.

"Thank you, Jesus, for the grace of having all the focolarini and focolarine

remember me in their prayers. It is a gift, another gift from you."

About a week later Rosa wrote, "S. came today. What a day! What a grace! I emptied my heart out to her, telling her all that has been bothering me. I told her everything, everything, and it was so beautiful! She gave me the answer, the

only answer: to say 'yes' always to Jesus Forsaken. There is no other way. Now I feel better spiritually."

To be continued

1) Chiara Lubich is the founder of the Focolare Movement; 2) From the book of meditations by Chiara Lubich entitled "Knowing how to lose" published by New City Press, New York.

(Continued from page 15)

third of Lascahobas' children) die in infancy. So FCLH has to take care of the birth certificates as well.

"All of this work is well worth it," said Mrs. Dubuisson proudly. "These children have never been exposed to books, yet twenty-three out of twenty-five are now in second grade. We also have twenty-seven children, ages seven to twelve, who go to evening school, and they too show good progress.

When asked why she was doing all this, Estelle Dubuisson has a simple answer: "Every mother feels pain for every child who suffers, when she sees them in rags, dying of diarrhea and malnutrition. You see, God gave me the blessing to raise my own three children by myself, so I want to spend the rest of my life thanking him by helping the needy children of Lascahobas.

It was also the positive, one might say "American" approach that "something *can* be done" that made her go ahead.

Not that her life in the United States was an easy one. She had to build it, step by step, all by herself: going back to school to become a Medical Laboratory Technologist, getting a job (which she has been at now for twenty years), and raising three children.

Today Estelle Dubuisson lives in an attractive house in Brooklyn, which is also the headquarters where the officers of FCLH meet to discuss and decide on present and future activities. These activities have not gone unnoticed, for Estelle Dubuisson has received various

community awards, including the 1984 "Caribbean American Mother of the Year."

Although born into fairly comfortable circumstances—at least by Haitian standards—she recalls how they used to keep open house on holidays, welcoming everybody who would come in from the street, treating them to the good things her mother used to prepare—Estelle knew suffering at an early age. She was a sickly child, afflicted with rheumatic fever, and when she was ten years old, she was not expected to live. She recovered, however, and when she was a teenager in school, she had another experience which is closely related to what she is doing now. It came back to her, in fact, when the school teacher of Lascahobas told her, a couple of years ago, that the children were falling asleep in the afternoon.

Estelle and her sister were sent to school at Port au Prince. Their parents arranged for them to stay with a local family and sent a certain amount of money every month to cover the expenses of food

and lodging. But the family they stayed with was very poor. There were six children, and so the food money which was meant for two, ended up being shared by eleven people, including some relatives.

Estelle did not want her parents to know about this situation, nor did she want to accept any of the food distributed in school for poor children. She was eager to finish the school year, which was her last, and somehow managed to go on. But she did find it difficult to stay awake in class, weak as she was from her "reduced" diet. "So I know how malnutrition can affect the children," she said with a sigh.

Estelle Dubuisson has come a long way since she stood at the street corners of Lascahobas to see how many children did not go to school. "When I started out thirteen years ago," she recalls, "I had no intention of going so far. And there is still so much more to be done. But I know that it is God, in his infinite love who will help me bring everything ahead. □

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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT — SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according to the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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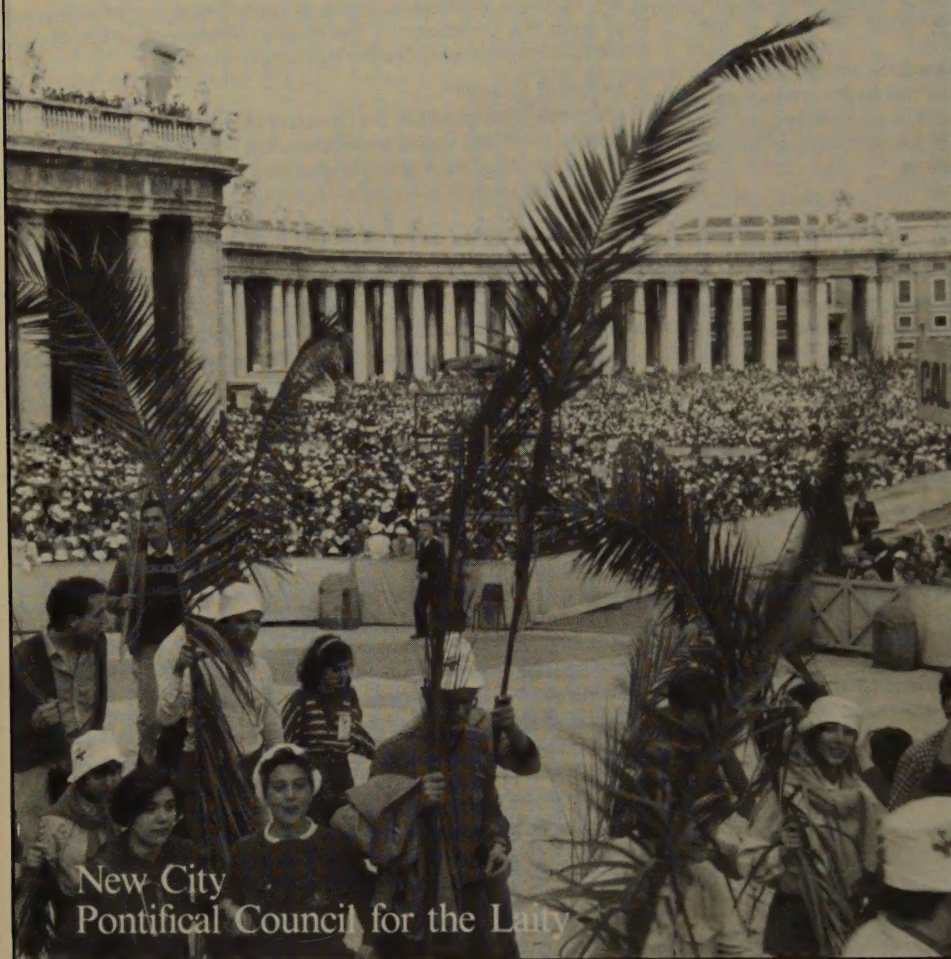
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